

Finding the Hidden Treasures: A Tourism Development Plan for Mooresville, Indiana

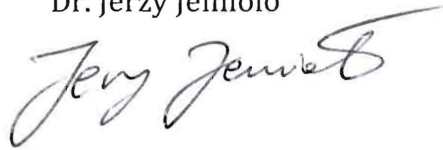
An Honors Thesis (Geog 491)

by

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A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jerzy Jemioło". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, stylized "J" and "E".

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Abstract

All major tourist destinations today were once an unknown small town. However, once the treasure of the town was found, people began flocking there. In order for a location to be successful as a tourist destination, local leaders must set goals, plan, and market the area. The tourism development plan for Mooresville, Indiana follows the steps of turning a small, unknown town into a place tourists want to visit. By naming the positives of the town, what there is to do in Mooresville, and who the target market is, I can then go on to set reachable goals for the location. In this document, I create goals for Mooresville, and outline a plan of how to reach those goals in order to make Mooresville into a product that can be sold and draw more tourists to the area.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Jerzy Jemiolo, for being there for me during my work on this project. Without his instruction before I began work on this project, and throughout the process, I would be lost.

I would also like to thank my parents for giving me helpful advice on the positives of Mooresville.

I would like to thank Jessica and Richard who drove through town with me on search of the hidden treasures of Mooresville, Indiana.

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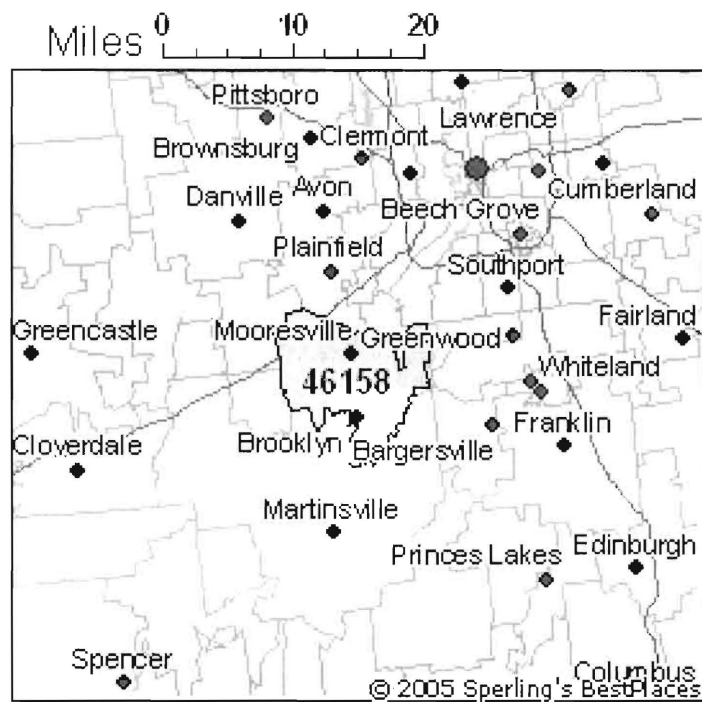
Author's Statement

This honors thesis uses the knowledge I gained from Geog 491, a tourism development course offered by the Geography department of Ball State University. I use the processes for planning in order to make a relatively unknown town into a low-level tourist destination. I chose to develop a plan for Mooresville, Indiana because it has been my home for nearly fifteen years.

Mooresville has done a lot in the recent years to better the look of the area. They have redone roadways, and added a new zip-line to the local park. However, there are still many more improvements that need to be done in order to create a more tourist friendly area. The biggest issue for tourism is the lack of accommodations and marketing. In this plan, these issues and others will be resolved.

Processes

In order to create a strategic plan for tourism at a specific location, a developer must first analyze the resources in the area. These resources vary from daily needs of a tourist such as lodging and grocery stores to recreation needs such as parks and movie theaters. Once the resources of a location have been verified, a developer then creates a vision of what the destination should be like if it is in an ideal condition. This includes a town motto, infrastructure, a target market, and additional tourism resources needed. A developer then creates goals and strategies for the local government, businesses, and the nonprofit sector. Once these goals have been set for the location, the final step is to outline the ways in which the goals will be implemented and achieved.



<http://www.bestplaces.net/zip-code/indiana/mooresville/46158>



<http://crusenberrygarrettreunion.org/>

Resource Analysis

In order to be a great tourist destination, a location needs a unique point of interest. If everything is built only for tourism, there is no real pull for tourists to the location. When looking at the largest destinations in the world, they all started from simple points of interest that were there before the new infrastructure was built in order to support tourism. One example would be Niagara Falls. The falls themselves are the major draw to the region, and were there long before the casinos, hotels, and miniature golf courses. Tourists come to a certain location before the community earns money from tourism, and when those early tourists come, the community starts earning the money it takes to build new attractions. Those early tourists only come because there is something different and unique about a location. During a resource analysis, a tourism developer finds the unique qualities of the area in order to know what to market for and add upon.

Here is the list of positive attributes and resources relevant to Mooresville, Indiana's success as a tourist destination:

1. Location

The location of Mooresville is within a thirty-minute drive of many major cities in South Central Indiana. This includes Indianapolis, Greenwood, Speedway, Avon, Plainfield, and Bloomington. These are cities with large populations that may be driving back and forth through Mooresville. Mooresville is quiet and quaint compared to these larger cities, and may offer some peace for residents of the surrounding cities.

The town is within ten miles of the Indianapolis International Airport. Mooresville is located near many large state roads and interstates. It is only four miles from Interstate 70, ten miles from Interstate 465, is on State Roads 144, 67, 37, and 267. All of these roads are heavily trafficked and have the potential to bring in many tourists.

2. Property With Meeting Space

One of the major components for tourism is business tourism. In order to satisfy the needs of business tourists, there must be space available for meetings. Mooresville currently has a few buildings open with meeting space such as Jones Crossing Banquet Hall, St. Francis Hospital, and local churches. However, there is also a vacant restaurant reception hall and hotel that has potential to be reopened and turned into more meeting space.

3. Festivals

Mooreville has many fairs and festivals throughout the year, one for every season. In the spring, there is the Mardi Gras celebration downtown that has food from a local restaurant and live music. In the summer there are fireworks and a parade for the 4th of July. In the fall, the town hosts the Old Settler's Fair, which consists of carnival rides, food, local business tents, and a parade. In the winter, the Mooreville Revitalization Group hosts the Mooreville Victorian Christmas. It has a live petting zoo with reindeer, sleigh rides, trolleys, live music, puppet shows, gingerbread house competition, and food.

4. Recreation Centers

There are 5 Mooreville parks. The largest is Pioneer Park. Pioneer Park spans across 130 acres, has several baseball diamonds, a public swimming pool, soccer fields, playgrounds, basketball courts, paved trails, and many shelters. The newest addition to Pioneer Park is a zip line.

Another area for recreation is Sonshine Park, which is where the local softball teams play. There is a new sport complex being built in Mooreville that will house even more baseball/softball diamonds. It will also be home to the League of Miracles, which is a baseball league for children with disabilities.

5. National Register of Historic Places

Mooreville is home to three buildings that are on the National Register of Historic Places. One is the Mooreville Gymnasium, currently known as Newby Gym. It is a preserved basketball gym from 1921 that is still being used by the local youth basketball league. Another is the Mooreville Friends Academy Building that was built in the 1860's. The last place on the register is the Mooreville Commercial Historic District that makes up the downtown area of Mooreville. The first building in the district was built in 1850. Not only does Mooreville have these places, but it is also the home of the Indiana state flag.

6. Restaurants

For a small town, Mooreville has a lot of family owned and operated restaurants. There are currently twenty-one restaurants that are locally owned. This number is huge compared to the only fourteen chain restaurants. Mooreville has food to meet any craving. There are barbeque places, cafes, breakfast joints, Cajun restaurants, pizza places, Asian cuisines, and of course cafeteria style eateries.

Vision Development

This section will describe the new and rebranded Mooresville as a tourist destination. It is a collection of the target market, town motto, new infrastructure, and impact on the community.

Target Market

- Foodies
- Business Tourists
- Local Retirees
- Families
- Outdoor Recreationists
- Medical/Health Tourists

Since Mooresville is between many large cities in Central Indiana, it is an ideal place for business meetings because it is the halfway point between them. There are places for meetings, and there are properties that can be renovated to add more space for meetings. This location is great for local retirees because it has many things to see and do for a single day. A retiree can come and fill a day eating all three meals at different local restaurants, visit antique shops, and go to the orchard. Mooresville is the ideal location for families since nearly all of the restaurants are family friendly and low priced. The parks offer many activities for families as well. There are several locations across the town that can draw in recreation tourists. There are trails, parks, rivers, woods, fishing areas, sport complexes, and the swimming pool that offer plenty of activities for tourists. There is a major hospital in Mooresville that focuses on cancer treatment, orthopedics, and obstetrics. This is a major component to the economy of Mooresville, and it would be even better if there were a place for the families of patients to stay in town.

Town Motto

- “Small Town, Big Eats”

This motto ties two of Mooresville’s best qualities together. It implies that Mooresville is a small town, which it is, and a small town means peaceful, quiet, and quaint. I want Mooresville to seem like a place where visitors come to get away from the hustle and bustle for a day. The “big eats” part of the motto represents the many restaurants that are well known, as well as the others that deserve to be discovered.

Infrastructure

- Visitor Center
- Hotel and Meeting Center
- Better Pedestrian Walkways in Historic Shopping District

There are a few additions to Mooresville that would work for an up and coming low-level tourist destination. First, there needs to be a visitor's center. Currently, the only offering Mooresville has that is similar to this is the Chamber of Commerce, but it is currently only open a few days a week, and not on the weekends. The Chamber of Commerce is not a great replacement for a visitor center because there are many other duties that building is responsible for.

Mooresville lacks the necessary accommodations for any overnight guests. There is not a single hotel, motel, or bed and breakfast within the town limits. In order to be successful, there needs to be a hotel and preferably a meeting or conference center in association with it. The Mooresville Commercial Historic District is a highlight of the town, but it is not very pedestrian friendly. There should be wide sidewalks with places to sit, as well as buttons at the stoplights to accommodate safer crosswalks.

Impact on the Community

- Community Involvement
- Increase in Revenue
- Increase in Jobs

With tourism comes an increase in revenue for the town. According to the multiplier effect, there should be a trickle down of revenue from the companies receiving the increase of business to the employees, and then those employees will spend their money at other places in the community. That way, the whole town increases its revenue. Also, with more people spending money within the town, the town itself will receive tax money. More tax money means better infrastructure for the community.

With an increase of tourism, there is often an increase of jobs. This is also good for a community. If there are more businesses opening to meet the market needs, more people in the area will have job opportunities.

However, in order to be successful at all in tourism, there needs to be some community involvement. These local businesses must be willing to support the local tourism, and do their best to meet the needs of the community and its tourists.

Strategy Selection

This section discusses the goals for change in the town, and why these goals are necessary in order to better the community's tourism potential.

1. Increase Community and Area Integration

Mooreville lacks community involvement when it comes to tourism. The community is very interested in supporting tourism in the area, but the local government does not succeed in finding opportunities for local leaders to connect with tourism. There is no town bulletin where local events can be shared, or a place for businesses to often discuss what is working and what is not. Many businesses see others as competition, and not as an asset to the community. By bringing together competing businesses on a single task, that might change opinions and open up a better way to bring tourists to Mooreville.

Also, many citizens of the community debate where the tax money should go. So by getting the community involved and telling them the benefits of tourism, the local government may have a better chance of putting the money towards tourism.

2. Create Infrastructure that Meets Market Needs

There is a dire need to open a hotel in Mooreville. It will increase funds that go towards the town from hotel taxes. Mooreville also needs a larger meeting center for meetings that will not fit into the St. Francis Hospital's conference rooms or Jones Banquet Center. It would be best to have a meeting center connected to or close to a hotel.

The Historic Downtown area needs to have better sidewalks. There is no space for outdoor seating for the many restaurants in the square. This would be prettier and more tourist friendly. Also, to cross the street is dangerous because there are no buttons at the crosswalk to change the lights. Also, there are few places to sit along the sidewalk.

Most importantly, there needs to be a visitors' center in Mooreville to promote the activities, restaurants, and hotels in the area. A visitors' center would create brochures and marketing materials for the town in order to draw in more tourists. A visitors' center's main goal is to bring groups to town such as school groups, bus tours, and conferences.

3. Increase Marketing

People do not go to places if they do not know it exists. Mooreville is a small town that many people do not recognize by name. It is important to tell potential visitors about a location in order to get people to come. As of now, there is very little marketing happening for Mooreville. There is a town website, but it is not updated regularly, and does not promote local events or tourism at all.

Implementation

The goals created in the last section need to be implemented in the community in order to succeed. This section describes the best methods on how to achieve the goals.

Increase Community and Area Integration

- Hold Town Meetings
 - There are already Chamber of Commerce meetings every third Thursday of the month. Invite guests to these meetings to discuss tourism in the community.
 - Tell the community and voters about the benefits tourism brings to a community. Benefits like increased employment, more revenue, the multiplier effect, and improved standards of living. Other benefits include the preservation of historic buildings and parks, and an increase in town pride.
 - Ask the community for any ideas and suggestions on how to increase interest from tourists.
 - Give annual awards to citizens that make the largest effort to beautify Mooresville, or make an effort to increase tourism during National Tourism Week in May.
- Create a Community Friendly Webpage
 - Currently, the town website is lacking in design and information. There needs to be an additional website to the current one. They can be connected, but there needs to be a “Visit Mooresville” website.
 - There needs to be a section in the website where local people can upload or email the website publisher about local events. There are many activities that happen around Mooresville that even the citizens do not know about, so the tourists do not either.
 - Having the community’s input on a website will make local businesses feel gratitude towards the tourists by having a place to promote their upcoming events. This will also increase participation in the events.
- “Taste of Mooresville” Event
 - Local businesses see each other as competition. Instead of the feeling of hostility towards each other, there should be a promotion of brotherhood.

- The event will take place in the historic commercial district, which is downtown Mooresville. This will promote the location as a tourist spot as well.
- Each restaurant in Mooresville will be invited to participate in the event. There will be tents for each restaurant to set up shop, and cook their specialties. Tickets will be sold to sample the cuisine.
- There will be music from local bands, games, and activities. It should be family friendly as this is one of the major markets.

Create Infrastructure that Meets Market Needs

- Renovate and Reopen the Lost Inn and Lost Name Restaurant
 - The Lost Inn is located on 100 Hopkins Trail, and has been empty for several years. It needs to be renovated and reopened under a different name.
 - In order to be reopened, it should be opened as a hotel and conference center owned by the town. This way, it will not close down as quickly.
 - The rooms need to be refurnished and remodeled to meet safety and cleanliness standards.
 - The Lost Name Restaurant is next door to the Lost Inn, and would be a strategic location for additional conference space. By renovating the restaurant into a conference hall, it will bring more meeting and conference tourism to Mooresville.
 - The restaurant will be able to cater within itself since it already was a restaurant. The large seating areas can be separated into classrooms for lectures, but have moving walls so they can open up for larger meetings and receptions.
- Renovate Mooresville Commercial Historic District
 - The sidewalks in the historic district need to be widened in order to better support pedestrian traffic.
 - In order to find the space for a wider sidewalk, it can be changed into a one-way street. This will also make it easier to block off the street during parades and festivals.
 - The buildings in the historic district need to be repainted and remodeled in the interiors. They are old, and they look like it. The paint needs to be refreshed in order to look appealing from the streets. The interiors of the buildings may have some safety issues that need to be addressed by the fire chief.

- Look into federal and state grants that will benefit business owners and communities that are preserving and beautifying a historic area.
- Create special tax zones to help fund the renovations.
- Create a Visitors' Center
 - The visitors' center needs to be created and placed in the historic district. There are several vacant buildings, and placing a visitors' center there will increase interest in other companies moving into the location.
 - The visitors' center needs to be staffed with both Mooresville natives and employees trained in tourism development.
 - The visitors' center must produce marketing and information materials in order to promote area activities and highlights.
 - Employees at the visitors' center need to sell to outside groups the town of Mooresville, and its benefits to other organizations.

Increase Marketing

- Website
 - There needs to be a "Visit Mooresville" website that can be attached and linked to the town website.
 - The website will have these sections:
 - Local Restaurants
 - Parks
 - Community Events
 - The "Local Restaurants" section will be split up by type of food served at the restaurants. The restaurant website links, phone numbers, and addresses will be posted with the name.
 - The "Parks" section will include the addresses of all five parks, since the current website does not. It will include a link to the Mooresville Parks website.
 - The "Community Events" tab will list the upcoming events. There will be a calendar at the top of the page and a comment section at the bottom where people can post other events not yet on the calendar.
 - The website needs to be updated regularly.

- The website will be promoted on other marketing materials in order to get more hits on the site.
- Commercials
 - Radio commercials will be produced.
 - The commercials need to highlight what there is to do and eat in Mooresville, as well as mention the motto, "Small Town, Big Eats."
 - There needs to be mention about Mooresville being the home of the Indiana state flag.
 - The commercials should air on local radio stations in Martinsville, Bloomington, and Indianapolis.
- Signage
 - There needs to be signage saying where Mooresville is on major exits leading to Mooresville.
 - Signage off of Interstate 465 at exit 8 and exit 4.
 - Signage on State Road 67 (Kentucky Ave.) at West Mooresville Road and County Road 1000 North.
 - Signage on State Road 37 at State Road 144.
- Billboards
 - The billboards will mention the distance to Mooresville, the website address, the town motto, and "home of the Indiana State Flag."
 - Billboard's background should be a photograph of a highlighted attraction in Mooresville.
 - A billboard will be placed on Kentucky Ave. at the Interstate 465 exit 8.
 - A billboard will be placed on Harding St. at the Interstate 465 exit 4.
 - A billboard will be placed inside the Indianapolis International Airport.
- Indiana Festival Guide
 - The Indiana Festival Guide is a collection of dates and locations for events in Indiana throughout the year.
 - The visitors' center will contact the publishers of the Indiana Festival Guide and place the Mardi Gras, Old Settler's Fair, Victorian Christmas, and the Taste of Mooresville event in the guide.

PRIORITY LIST

In an ideal world, all of the tasks will be completed. However, due to time constraints, community needs, and monetary restrictions, not all of the goals will be implemented. Some issues need to be addressed before anything else. Other tasks can only be implemented after others goals have been met. Here is the list ranking which tasks should be completed first.

1. Create a Community Involvement in Tourism Group
2. Hold the Taste of Mooresville Event
3. Contact the Indiana Festival Guide
4. Create a Visitors' Center or a Branch of the Chamber of Commerce
5. Create a Website
6. Create Billboards
7. Renovate Mooresville Commercial Historic District
8. Create Commercials
9. Renovate and Reopen Lost Inn Hotel
10. Renovate and Reopen Lost Name Restaurant

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